

IS THE BOOK OF MORMON FROM GOD? (PART I)

Dave Miller, Ph.D

[EDITORS' NOTE: This article is the first installment in a two-part critique of *The Book of Mormon*. It is certainly not the intention, either of Apologetics Press or the author of this article, to insult, demean, or misrepresent Mormons. Nevertheless, multiplied thousands of individuals, who have embraced Mormon doctrine, deserve the opportunity to assess their beliefs in light of the Bible and in anticipation of eternity. We sincerely pray that no reader will take personal affront at what follows, but will simply weigh the evidence and seek the truth.]

How may a person distinguish between truth and error? Can a person **know** which religion, if any, is right? Must a person rely on **subjective** inner inclinations and feelings? Or is religious truth ascertainable and knowable based on **objective** assessment? Some religions (e.g., Buddhism and Hinduism) base their credibility on some mystical or transcendental experience. Even some "Christian" groups claim that their credibility and authenticity may be established on the basis of the Holy Spirit Whom, they say, gives them their assurance. But when the Bible is examined, no such role is assigned to the Holy Spirit. Mystical religions have always existed, and have insisted that they are the recipients of leading and guidance from superior forces that are "better felt than told." The God of the Bible, on the other hand, always offered evidence—**proof**—of the divine origin of the message before He expected people

to believe (e.g., John 10:37-38; 20:30-31; Deuteronomy 18:21-22).

The nature of truth is such that it does not depend upon subjective human experience for its veracity. Rather, God created human beings with minds that were designed to function **rationally**—part of what it means to be created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27; cf. Lyons and Thompson, 2002). We humans have the capability, if we maintain an honest heart free from bias (Luke 8:15), to consider and weigh evidence, and to draw correct conclusions (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1). As Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The truthfulness of religious claims is **verifiable** on the basis of evidence and rational thought. Humans have the capacity, capability, and responsibility to reason logically, and distinguish between truth and falsehood. [NOTE: Allusions to *The Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price* are taken from a 1981 reprint that contains all three documents.]

FALLACIES OF MORMON SCRIPTURE

The nature of truth is such that it does not contradict itself. After literally centuries of scrutiny by hostile skeptics and unbelieving critics, the Bible has been found to be completely consistent with the nature of truth, logic, and

the laws of thought (Lyons, 2005). On the other hand, uninspired documents cannot stand up to such scrutiny. *The Book of Mormon* is one such document. **It lacks the marks of inspiration that characterize the Bible.** In an official publication of the LDS (Latter-day Saints), 31 conditions are identified as necessary in order to produce an inspired book. Condition #9 says, "You must not make any absurd, impossible, or contradictory statements" ("The Challenge...", 1990, p. 1). This affirmation is a self-evident truth. Yet, *The Book of Mormon* is guilty of violating these very criteria.

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Fallible, Uninspired Reliance on the KJV

In the first place, much of the King James Version of the Bible has been reproduced **verbatim** in *The Book of Mormon*—estimated to be from 17,000 to 27,000 words (Tanner, 1972, p. 81; cf. Bales, 1958, p. 157). For example, Mosiah 14 is a reproduction of Isaiah 53. Third Nephi 13:1-23 is simply Matthew 6:1-23. Moroni 7:45 is copied from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Moroni 7:48 is 1 John 3:2. Moroni 10:8-17 is taken from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Alma 5:52 is Matthew 3:10. Second Nephi 14:1-3 is Isaiah 4:1-3. The author of *The Book of Mormon* obviously had before him a copy of the King James Bible, and simply copied many sections directly from it (though it is claimed that *The Book of Mormon* was actually written from 600 to 421 B.C. [see “A Brief Explanation...,” 1981]). But this is only half of the problem on this point. The KJV is an **uninspired translation** of available Hebrew and Greek manuscripts into the English language of the late 16th and early 17th century, completed in 1611. But God gave the Old Testament to the Israelites in **their** native language (Hebrew), and He gave the New Testament in the first century in the **common language** of **that** day (Koine Greek). Question: why in the world would God give His Word to Joseph Smith in **19th century America**

(1830), not in **American** English, but in **the British language of 17th century England**? The obvious answer to the question is that **God would not do so**. This absurdity is inconsistent with the nature of God.

The reproduction of so much of the KJV in *The Book of Mormon* raises four additional concerns. First, Mormons frequently attempt to establish the superiority of *The Book of Mormon* over the Bible by insisting that the Bible has been corrupted through the centuries in the process of translation (a contention similar to Islam’s defense of the Quran—see Miller, 2005). But if the Bible has been so adversely affected, why does *The Book of Mormon* quote so much of the King James Version? To be consistent, those who hold this viewpoint must admit that **at least those portions of the Bible** are to be considered accurate.

Second, all textual critics (those who study the original manuscript evidence that attests to the text of the New Testament) know that **textual variants** exist in the extant manuscript evidence. The vast majority of these discordant readings are resolved when all of the textual evidence is considered (e.g., Metzger, 1968, p. 185). If *The Book of Mormon* were inspired, not only would it refrain from incorporating the King James Version

within its pages, it also would not include in those sections **the manuscript errors** that have crept into the text. Here was the perfect opportunity in 1830 for God to clarify the variants that had accumulated during the previous 200 years (as well as the 1,500 years prior to the KJV). Instead, ***The Book of Mormon* perpetuated the mistakes.**

For example, several textual variants occur in Matthew 6—a chapter that was reproduced in 3 Nephi 13. In Matthew 6:4, the *Textus Receptus* (the Greek text upon which the KJV was based) contained the words “himself” and “openly.” These insertions were perpetuated by the author of *The Book of Mormon* in 3 Nephi 13:4, as was the word “openly” in verses 8 and 16 of Matthew 6 (and 3 Nephi 13:6,18). Likewise, the Trinitarian ascription in 3 Nephi 13:13 and Matthew 6:13 in the KJV (“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen”) is not supported by the earliest and most reliable manuscript witnesses to the text of the New Testament. Subsequent translations, including the ASV, omit the sentence altogether, or, in the case of the NASB, place it in brackets. The manuscript evidence simply does not support these additions as being in the original, inspired autograph authored by Matthew. Many additional instances of this same type of faux pas can be cited. The one who was responsible for producing *The Book of Mormon* in these cases unquestionably (1) relied on the KJV and (2) demonstrated his ignorance of textual criticism.

Third, in addition to errors that are due to textual variants, the KJV also made **grammatical and stylistic** errors that were naively copied by *The Book of Mormon*. For example, in Hebrew, singular masculine nouns are changed to plural by appending “*im*” (pronounced “cem”)—the equivalent of “s” or “es” in English. The Hebrew words “cherub” and “seraph” are singular nouns. The plural forms of these words are “cherubim” and “seraphim.” The KJV translators mistakenly added an “s” (“cherubims” and “seraphims”) to these terms to denote a plural form (e.g., Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:18,19,20,22; Isaiah 6:2,6; Hebrews

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9:5). Alluding to *cherubim*, Adam Clarke explained: “[T]o add an *s* to this when we introduce such words into English, is very improper; therefore the word should be written *cherubim*, not *cherubims*” (n.d., 1:56, italics in orig.; cf. Lewis, 1991, p. 59). Yet the original 1830 *Book of Mormon* reproduced the same mistake as the KJV in this regard (Alma 12:21; 42:2,3; 2 Nephi 16:2,6), though corrections were made in later editions. The unbiased observer is forced to conclude: God knows Hebrew and how to transfer words from one language to another; the author of *The Book of Mormon* obviously did not.

Another sample of stylistic error is the use of the expression “it came to pass.” This expression is a **Semitism**, or Hebraism, i.e., an idiomatic oddity or peculiarity of the Hebrew language that lacks a corresponding equivalent in English. Newer translations either drop it completely or render it with an approximate English equivalent like “it came about” or “it happened.” The

KJV simply transferred the Semitism directly into English and, under its influence, has caused the expression to be naturalized into English religious usage. Nevertheless, it is not an idiom that is native to English. Yet *The Book of Mormon* is literally inundated with the expression—as if the author was deliberately attempting to make his writing **sound** biblically or divinely authentic. In reality, he was unwittingly making it sound Semitic in 17th-century English! But God would not have communicated with Americans in 1830 through the convoluted pathway of Hebrew, to 17th-century British English, to 19th-century American English. Likewise, the peoples of the specific historical periods that *The Book of Mormon* claims to be depicting (e.g., the Nephites) would have had no earthly reason to have spoken in Hebrew themselves, nor to have their history reported in Hebrew phraseology and Semitic idiom. Apparently, later Mormon authorities, unable to completely eradi-

cate this stylistic feature due to its extensive occurrence, were nevertheless so uncomfortable with the overuse of the phrase that they have deleted some of its occurrences when so many were used in close proximity with each other. For example, in Alma 14:7, the original *Book of Mormon* had three occurrences of “it came to pass”—in the same verse! Current editions have only one—which raises the additional question of *The Book of Mormon*’s own faulty transmission.

Fourth, in 3 Nephi 20:23-26, Jesus is represented as the speaker, and He applies to Himself the prophecy that Moses made in Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19. Yet, the author of *The Book of Mormon* unquestionably relied on Acts 3:22-26, where **Peter** paraphrased the Deuteronomy passage, and then added **his own comments**. *The Book of Mormon* **mistakenly** has Jesus including Peter’s appended comments **as if they were part of Moses’ words** in Deuteronomy. Compare the three passages to see the fallacy:

Deuteronomy 18:15,19 (KJV)	Acts 3:22-26 (KJV)	3 Nephi 20:23-26
<p>¹⁵The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.</p> <p>¹⁹And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.</p>	<p>²²For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.</p> <p>²³And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.</p> <p>²⁴Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.</p> <p>²⁵Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.</p> <p>²⁶Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.</p>	<p>²³Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.</p> <p>And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.</p> <p>²⁴Verily I say unto you, yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have testified of me.</p> <p>²⁵And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.</p> <p>²⁶The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant—</p>

Contradiction Among Mormon Scriptures

In addition to the absurdities and contradictions that exist within *The Book of Mormon* in its close reliance on the KJV, contradictions also exist between *The Book of Mormon* and the other Mormon scriptures. Consider, for example, the serious contradiction in the promulgation of polygamy. *The Book of Mormon* condemns the practice of plural marriages in no uncertain terms. The condemnation comes in a context in which Jacob denounced the wickedness of the Nephites in the 5th-6th centuries B.C.:

But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son. Behold, **David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord....** Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have **save it be one wife**; and concubines he shall have none; For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And **whoredoms are an abomination before me**; thus saith the Lord of Hosts (Jacob 2:23-24,26-28, emp. added; cf. 1:15; Ether 10:5; *Doctrine and Covenants* 49:16).

These referenced verses from *The Book of Mormon* enjoin **monogamy** with uncompromising vigor. Yet the *Doctrine and Covenants* flatly contradicts *The Book of Mormon* on this point:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, **justified** my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, **David and Solomon**, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for

all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an **everlasting** covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. **...David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon** and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, **from the beginning of creation until this time**; and in **nothing did they sin** save in those things which they received not of me. **David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me**, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in **none of these things did he sin** against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife (132:1-4,38-39, emp. added).

Two serious contradictions are evident. First, *The Book of Mormon* clearly condemned plural marriage as one of the “grosser crimes” and “whoredom”—at least among the Nephites. It specifically singled out the plural marriages of **David and Solomon**, denouncing them as an “abomination.” Yet *Doctrine and Covenants* insisted that David and Solomon were completely **justified**, and **committed no sin** in having multiple wives and concubines. Observe the comparison between the two books:

BOOK OF MORMON	DOCTRINE & COVENANTS
“David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.”	“David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon...and in nothing did they sin.... David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me.”

To avoid self-contradiction, the author of *The Book of Mormon* and *Doctrine and Covenants* could have worded these verses differently. For example, he could have stated that God enjoined plural marriages at one point in history, but chose not to enjoin the practice at another point in history. Or, he could have said that plural marriages were to be practiced by some people early in history but not by others later in history. In either case,

no contradiction would exist. A Bible example is seen in the fact that God enjoined animal sacrifice on the Jews in the Old Testament, but forbade its use for all people in the New Testament. **But this is not what Mormon scripture does!** It specifically identifies the polygamy of **David and Solomon**, and then makes the mistake of both approving and condemning it. This circumstance constitutes a flat contradiction. David and Solomon having multiple wives was both right and not right at the same time and in the same way. Two statements are contradictory when they **cannot both be true** (cf. McGarvey, 1974, 3:31). [NOTE: Yet another indication of Joseph Smith's uninspired status was his allusion in the above quotation (Jacob 2:27) to a man being permitted only one wife, but “concubines he shall have none.” This reference betrays an ignorance of the use of an ancient term. A “concubine” in antiquity was a **wife**—not a mistress (unmarried sexual partner)—despite popular misconception (cf. Hamilton, 1980, 2:724)].

Second, *Doctrine and Covenants* states that the practice of plural marriage in this life is an **everlasting** covenant. The term “eternal” or “everlasting” as used in the Bible can sometimes be abbreviated to refer to a period of time of limited duration (e.g., Jonah 2:6). However, when additional terminology is employed that reinforces the primary meaning of “forever,” an abbreviated period is excluded. Terminology used in *The Book of Mormon* shows that “everlasting,” as applied to the covenant of plural marriage, was intended in its ordinary meaning of **forever**. Its application included one's entire earthly sojourn, since the text says

Solomon, Moses, and many others had practiced it “**from the beginning of creation until this time**.” Other references confirm this understanding: “both as well for time and for all eternity” (*D&C* 132:7); “in the world” (*D&C* 132:15); “on the earth” (*D&C* 132:46,48). Even Joseph Smith's wife, Emma, was commanded to accept the additional wives given by God to her husband (*D&C* 132:52). Section 132 of *Doctrine and*



Sam Harris, Christ's Resurrection, and the Nature of Belief

Kyle Butt, M.A.

Sam Harris has helped lead the new brigade of militant atheists in their charge against God. His bestseller, *The End of Faith*, attempts to persuade the reader that all religions, including Christianity, are not only useless, but often quite harmful. In truth, he does an outstanding job showing some of the problems with false religions like Islam, and he also effectively repudiates perversions of Christian doctrine that attempt to pass themselves off as authentic. What he fails to do, however, is accurately assess true, New Testament Christianity, a fault that lies at the heart of much modern, atheistic writing.

As a case in point, Harris asked the question: "What should we believe?" He answered:

We believe most of what we believe about the world because others have told us to.... In fact, the more educated we become, the more our beliefs come to us second hand. A person who believes only those propositions for which he can provide full sensory or theoretical justification will know almost nothing about the world (2004).

Harris then proceeded to discuss how to assess the validity of what we should or should not believe that other people tell us. He gave three sources of information and analyzed the validity of each. First, he proposed the scenario of an anchorman on the evening news claiming that a fire in Colorado had burned 100,000 acres. Second, he listed as a source of information numerous biologists who claim that DNA is the "molecular basis for sexual reproduction." And the third source of information he listed was the Pope, who claims that Jesus is the Son of God, was born of a virgin, and was resurrected bodily after death.

After some discussion, Harris concluded that the first and second sources of information are reliable and should be trusted, but the third, the Pope, is not. What is interesting about Harris' discussion is why he concluded that the story about the fire on the evening news is trustworthy. He elaborated:

Given our beliefs about the human mind, the success of our widespread collaboration with other human beings, and the degree to which we all rely on the news, it is scarcely conceivable that a respected television network and a highly paid anchorman are perpetrating a hoax, or that thousands of firefighters, newsmen, and terrified homeowners have mistaken Texas for Colorado. Implicit in such commonsense judgments lurks an understanding of the causal connections between various processes in the world, the likelihood of different outcomes, and the vested interests or lack thereof, of those whose testimony we are considering. What would a professional news anchor stand to gain from lying about a fire in Colorado? We need not go into the details here, if the anchor on the evening news says that there is a fire in Colorado and then shows us images of burn-

ing trees, we can be reasonably sure that there really is a fire in Colorado (2004).

It is not surprising that Harris follows this explanation with his statement about mistrusting the words of the Pope pertaining to the resurrection of Christ. In this regard, he is right: the Pope's "word" on the resurrection is no more authoritative than the word of Sam Harris. But notice the straw man Harris has built. He rightly attacks the false belief of the Pope's infallibility, but **he does not address the real evidence that validates Jesus' resurrection.** Were we to put the evidence for the resurrection beside that of the news story, the resurrection would have unquestionably more "commonsense judgments" to commend it, making it much more "reasonably sure" than a modern news story.

Analyzing the resurrection of Christ in light of Harris' filter of evidence, it is "scarcely conceivable" that several hundred eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15:6) of the resurrected Christ simply concocted the story to further their agenda. What would ordinary fishermen, farmers, or businessmen and women stand to gain from perpetuating such a hoax? The reward for their testimony was that many of them were stoned, killed with the sword, tortured, or imprisoned for nothing more than saying that they knew Jesus came back to life. Thousands of their peers listened with interest to their evidence, assessed the value of the witnesses and other information, such as the empty tomb of Christ, and were forced to conclude that the resurrection had, indeed, occurred (Acts 2:41). Many among the most educated classes, including the priests, who would have had numerous reasons to deny the validity of the evidence, were convinced of the truth of Christ's resurrection (Acts 6:7). The many "infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3) offered for the resurrection are recorded in the most reliable documents ever to come down to modern man from any historical repository (see Butt, 2004). In fact, so powerful are the various evidences for the resurrection (see Butt, 2002), that, knowing what we know "about the casual connections between various processes" and humanity's "success of our widespread collaboration with other human beings," it is inconceivable that the resurrection of Christ is a hoax. The Pope is an easy target. The **real** evidence for the resurrection is not.

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Anything Finely Tuned Demands a Fine Tuner

I have owned two new cars in my lifetime, both of which were fine-tuned machines. The pistons moved with remarkable precision. The spark plugs repeatedly ignited the gasoline at an intended time. Just the right amount of oxygen was mixed with the fuel for ideal performance. The front end was perfectly aligned. The tires were properly balanced. Thousands of intended actions took place at precisely the right times so that I could swiftly and safely drive from place to place, time and again. Until it was totaled in 2007, my 1997 Saturn SL1 ran amazingly well, and my 2008 Toyota Corolla is still functioning as a fine-tuned machine.

A fine-tuned machine demands a fine-tuner. Everyone knows that cars and computers, pianos and projectors all require engineers, technicians, and tuners for them to function properly. New machines are built by intelligent people. Older machines receive tune-ups by intelligent tuners. Surely, no one believes that tune-ups happen by accident. How can anything be finely tuned without a fine tuner?

Atheistic evolutionists continually find themselves in a conundrum, because of their admittance that our Universe is fine-tuned. If the physical laws of the Universe (e.g., gravity) are merely “inherent in the physical universe” and simply evolved to their current status by time and chance along with everything else that exists (Davies, 2007, 194[2610]:33), the question arises, “Why, then, is the Universe so fine-tuned?” Why do planets and moons not crash into each other during their orbits? How can astronomers predict with amazing accuracy where a planet will be in the distant future? Why is the force of gravity on Earth just right for life to exist?

In a recent *New Scientist* cover story about gravity, Michael Brooks described the force as strange, mysterious, and puzzling. He insisted that one reason gravity does not make sense (to him) is because it is “fine-tuned”: “If it [gravity—EL] were a **tiny** bit stronger, none of us would be here to scoff at its puny nature” (2009, 202[2712]:30, emp. added). Regarding the expansion of space (after the **alleged** Big Bang) and the pull of gravity, Brooks wrote:

It turns out that the struggle between these two was **balanced on a knife-edge**. If the expansion of space had overwhelmed the pull of gravity in the newborn universe, stars, galaxies and humans would never have been able to form. If, on the other hand, gravity had been much stronger, stars and galaxies might have formed, but they would have quickly collapsed in on themselves and each other. What’s more, the gravitational distortion of space-time would have folded up the universe in a big crunch. Our cosmic history could have been over by now.

Only the middle ground, where the expansion and the gravitational strength balance...allows life to form (p. 31, emp. added).

Brooks then asked, “Why does G [the designation for the gravitational constant—EL] have the value that allowed life to form in the cosmos?” (p. 31). His answer: “The simple but unsatisfying answer is that we could not be here to observe it if it were any different. As to the deeper answer—no one knows....**We have never explained any basic constant of nature**” (p. 31, emp. added).

Evolutionists like Michael Brooks admit that “no one knows” why the force of gravity is so perfect as to allow life to exist on Earth. Evolutionists acknowledge: “We have never explained any basic constant in nature.” Atheistic evolutionists allege that the Universe and its laws are the result of mindless, naturalistic, random processes, yet at the same time they contend that it is “uniquely hospitable,” “remarkable,” and “ordered in an intelligible way” (Davies, pp. 30,34). In a *New Scientist* article titled “Laying Down the Laws,” Paul Davies of Arizona State University admitted the many examples of “uncanny bio-friendly ‘coincidences’” and “fine-tuned properties” of the Universe (p. 30). He then wrote: “Like Baby Bear’s porridge in the story of Goldilocks, our universe seems ‘just right’ for life. It looks, to use astronomer Fred Hoyle’s dramatic description, as if ‘a super-intellect has been monkeying with physics’” (p. 30).

In truth, it “**looks**...as if a super-intellect” lies behind the precise, fine-tuned, law-driven Universe, because there **is** a Super-intellect behind it all. The simple, satisfying answer for why the Universe works so well, and for why Earth is so perfect for life’s existence, is because the Universe has a fine-tuner. Just as a fine-tuned automobile demands a tuner, so our fine-tuned Universe demands a designer. **Nothing** makes sense if an ultimate Tuner does not exist, but **everything** makes sense if He does. Indeed, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth” (Genesis 1:1). He ordained the moon and the stars. The heavens are the work of His fingers (Psalm 8:3). They declare His glory (Psalm 19:1). “He upholds all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3, NASB). The infinite, eternal Creator “is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). He is the ultimate tuner of all that is finely tuned.

Eric Lyons

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Covenants claims to have been revealed to Joseph Smith in 1843. Yet 47 years later, on September 24, 1890, President Wilford Woodruff issued an official repudiation of the doctrine:

We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice.... There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy.... And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land” (“Official Declaration—1” in *Doctrine and Covenants*, 1981, pp. 291-292).

In excerpts from three addresses that he delivered regarding this manifesto, Woodruff explained that if they continued to practice plural marriage, temples would be confiscated by the civil authorities, and the First Presidency and Twelve, and family heads, would be imprisoned. If, on the other hand, they ceased the practice, in order to abide by the law of the land, they would be able to continue the duties and ordinances of the church (including baptism for the dead). **Question:** Why would God refer to plural marriage as a perpetual practice that would bring damnation upon those who fail to practice it, and then call for Latter-day Saints to refrain from such marriages? God is timeless, and would have known ahead of time

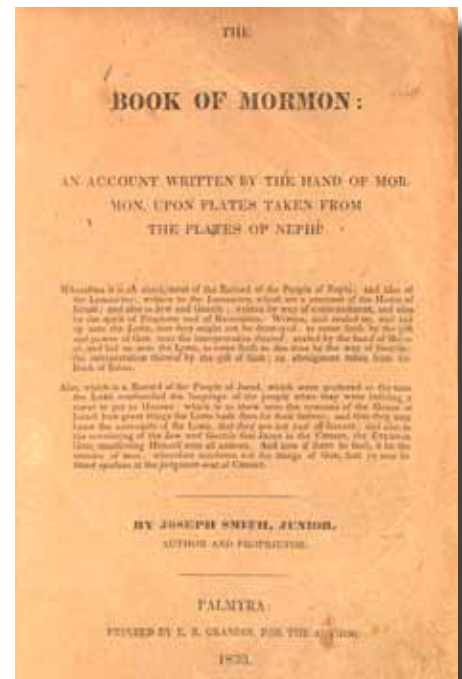
that the U.S. government would reach a point at which it would call the Mormon practice of plural marriage to account. Therefore, He would not have enjoined the requirement as “everlasting” if He later intended to nullify the practice. Nor would God have withdrawn one of His “everlasting commandments” simply because the law of the land by a pagan government made the commandment illegal and implemented persecution. **When in all of human history has God ever bowed to civil government in its opposition to His will—even when it brought severe persecution and death to His followers?**

Changes and Corrections

Another legitimate affirmation listed in “The Challenge” is condition #10: “When you finish in 60 days, you must **make no changes in the text**. The first edition must stand forever” (p. 1, emp. added). “Houston, we have a problem.” Informed students of the Bible are well aware that no original autographs of the Bible are extant. We are completely dependent upon copies of copies of copies (e.g., Comfort, 1990, p. 4). Not so with *The Book of Mormon*. **The original 1830 first printed edition of *The Book of Mormon* exists!** In the words of Latter-day Saints President Wilford C. Wood in 1958: “I do testify that the uncut sheets of the complete First Edition of the Book of Mormon have been reproduced in its original unchanged condition; that this

Original 1830 Book of Mormon

Image Courtesy Library of Congress



is a correct and perfect restoration of the First Edition of the Book of Mormon as received by the Prophet Joseph Smith and printed in Palmyra, New York in 1830” (*The Book of Mormon*, 1830, prefatory material). Latter-day Saint authorities have repeatedly affirmed that the original *Book of Mormon* contained no errors. In 1883, George Reynolds, a member of the First Council of the Seventy, stated: “It was done by divine aid” (p. 71). Reynolds referred to the eyewitness account of Martin Harris—one of the scribes who participated with Joseph Smith in the translation of *The Book of Mormon* (p. 91). Joseph Smith claimed to have found gold plates that he translated into English using an instrument known as the “Urim and Thummim”—two white stones fastened together by a casing of silver, comparable to spectacles. Smith would hold the stones between himself and the gold plates. In 1881, the sixth president of the Mormon Church, Joseph F. Smith, explained the translation process (as reported by Oliver Huntington):

The Lord caused each word spelled as it is in the Book to appear on the stones in short sentences or words, and when Joseph had uttered the sentence or word before him and the scribe had written it properly, that sentence would disappear and another appear.

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

September 13	Cincinnati, OH	(513) 226-6680
September 20	Hoover, AL	(205) 822-5610
September 23	Florence, AL	(800) 367-3565
September 25-27	Fort Worth, TX	(817) 237-1205

Eric Lyons

September 13	Enterprise, AL	(334) 347-8917
September 18-20	Grants Pass, OR	(541) 476-3100

Dave Miller

September 6	Dayton, TN	(423) 775-1201
September 13-14	Pennsboro, WV	(304) 659-2542
September 18-20	Abilene, TX	(325) 695-0055
September 25-26	Rome, GA	(706) 234-4444



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And if there was a word wrongly written or even a letter incorrect the writing on the stones would remain there. Then Joseph would require the scribe to spell the reading of the last spoken and thus find the mistake and when corrected the sentence or word would disappear as usual (n.d., p. 168, emp. added).

This procedure, that guaranteed complete accuracy of transcription, was further verified by David Whitmer. Whitmer, who continues to be listed in currently circulating copies of *The Book of Mormon* as one of the trio that constitute "The Testimony of the Three Witnesses," described the process of translation in the following words:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to

Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man (Whitmer, 1887, Ch. 1, emp. added).

In view of the specific procedures by which the gold plates were translated, *The Book of Mormon* ought to be perfect. Yet, when one compares the original *Book of Mormon* with a currently circulating edition, one observes that many changes have been made in *The Book of Mormon* since the original 1830 edition. This circumstance is completely unlike manmade translations of the Bible. All translators of the Bible are uninspired in their translating efforts. Joseph Smith, on the other hand, claimed to have been supernaturally guided in the process of translating *The Book of Mormon*, and preserved from making any errors. One official explanation as to why the original 1830 edition of *The Book of Mormon* was filled with grammatical mistakes and content blunders is—"printer's errors." This claim, of course, contradicts the above claim of President Wilford, who vouched for the authenticity of the existing 1830 edition

and even included in his reproduction of it a "memorandum" by one of the original printer's associates—John Gilbert. The memorandum recounts the care given to insuring accuracy in the printing of the manuscript that was brought to the printer by Hyrum Smith (Joseph's brother), who, along with Martin Harris, supervised the project. Hence, the claim that "printer's errors" are responsible for the errors in the original 1830 edition would be a suitable explanation if it fit the facts, but it simply cannot account for the types of mistakes contained in *The Book of Mormon*—the types of mistakes printers do not make.

Grammatical Mistakes

Consider a few of the estimated 4,000+ grammatical mistakes that have been corrected in subsequent editions. The original 1830 *Book of Mormon* in Jacob 7:24 read, "but it all were vain." Alma 48:25 read, "for the promise of the Lord were...." Alma 53:5 read, "it were easy to guard them." 1 Nephi 5:11 read, "Adam and Eve, which was our first parents." All of these grammatical (not printer) errors have been corrected in more recent editions.

I shall die; wherefore, I desire to speak unto the people before that I shall die.

And it came to pass that on the morrow, that the multitude were gathered together; and he spake plainly unto them, and denied the things which he had taught them; and confessed the Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, and the ministering of Angels. And he spake plainly unto them, that he had been deceived by the power of the Devil. And he spake of hell, and of eternity, and of eternal punishment. And he sayeth, I fear lest I have committed the unpardonable sin, for I have lied unto God: for I denied the Christ, and said that I believed the Scriptures; and they truly testify of him. And because that I have thus lied unto God, I greatly fear lest my case shall be awful; but I confess unto God.

And it came to pass that when he had said these words, he could say no more; and he gave up the ghost. And when the multitude had witnessed that he spake these things as he was about to give up the ghost, they were astonished exceedingly; inasmuch, that the power of God came down upon them, and they were overcome, that they fell to the earth. Now, this thing was pleasing unto me, Jacob; for I had requested it of my Father which was in Heaven: for he had heard my cry, and answered my prayer.

And it came to pass that peace, and the love of God, was restored again among the people; and they searched the Scriptures, and hearkened no more to the words of this wicked man. And it came to pass that many means were devised, to reclaim and restore the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth; but it all were vain for they delighted in wars and bloodsheds; and they had an eternal hatred against us, their brethren. And

their joy was full, and my mother was comforted; and she spake, saying: Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and gave them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them. And after this manner of language did she speak.

And it came to pass that they did rejoice exceedingly, and did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord; and they gave thanks unto the God of Israel. And after that they had given thanks unto the God of Israel, my father Lehi took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning. And he beheld that they did contain the five Books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, which was our first parents and also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah; and also the prophecies of the Holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah.

And it came to pass that my father Lehi also found upon the plates of brass, a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph which was the son of Jacob, which was sold into Egypt, and which was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father Jacob and all his household from perishing with famine. And they were also led out of captivity and out of the land of Egypt, by that same God who had preserved them. And thus my father Lehi did discover the genealo-

Content Mistakes

Consider also a few of the many changes that have been made that correct **content** mistakes. In Mosiah 21:28, “Benjamin” has been changed to “Mosiah” (since King Benjamin was already dead at this point in the narrative—Mosiah 6:4-5). In Alma 37:21, “directors” has been changed to “interpreters.” In 1 Nephi 13:32, “state of awful woundedness” has been changed to “awful state of blindness.” In Mosiah 27:29, “wrecked” has been changed to “racked.” In Alma 13:20 and 41:1, “arrest” has been changed to “wrest.” In Alma 17:13, “arriven” has been changed to “arrived.” Even the original 1830 title page, which listed Joseph Smith as “Author and Proprietor,” has been altered; now he is simply “translator.” In 1 Nephi 20:1, the phrase “or out of the waters of baptism” has been inserted. It was not in the original 1830 edition.

Please observe: Printers occasionally transpose letters, or garble a word, or insert the same line twice, or omit a word or two, perhaps a line here and there. But **the above changes are not the kinds of errors that printers make.**

[to be continued]

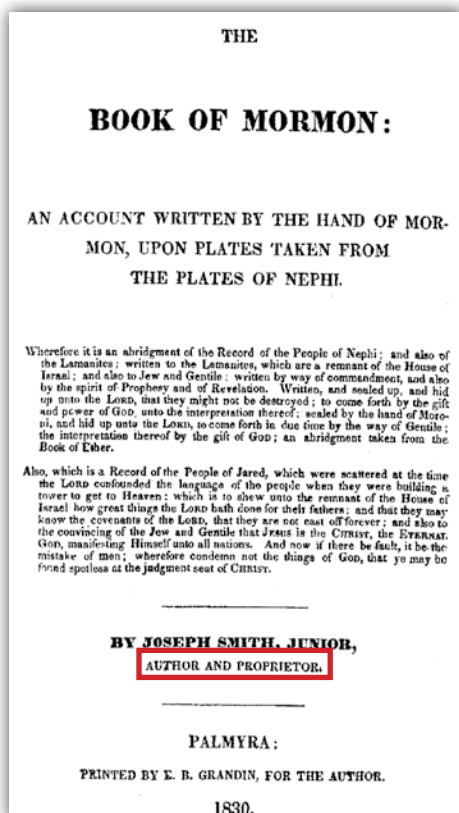


Image Courtesy Institute for Religious Research

the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles in that state of awful woundedness which they are in, because of the plain and most the Gospel of the Lamb which hath been abominable church, whose formation thou ore, saith the Lamb of God, I will be mercies, unto the visiting of the remnant of the great judgment. pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto d, saith the Lamb of God, after that I have of the House of Israel, and this remnant of the seed of thy father; wherefore, after that in judgment, and smitten them by the hand and after that the Gentiles do stumble ex of the most plain and precious parts of the b which hath been kept back, by that abom ch is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb; be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, omuch that I will bring forth unto them in uch of my Gospel, which shall be plain and Lamb; for behold, saith the Lamb, I will o thy seed, that they shall write many things ter unto them, which shall be plain and pre hat thy seed shall be destroyed and dwind also, the seed of thy brethren; behold, e hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, iver of the Lamb; and in them shall be, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my sal-

wilderness, and they fasted much, and prayed m Lord would grant unto them a portion of his sp them, and abide with them, that they might be an the hands of God, to bring, if it were possible, t the Lamanites, to the knowledge of the truth; edge of the baseness of the traditions of their f were not correct.

And it came to pass that the Lord did visit spirit, and said unto them, Be comforted; and th fortified. And the Lord said unto them also, Go the Lamanites, thy brethren, and establish my shall be patient in long suffering and afflictions, shew forth good examples unto them in me, an an instrument of thee in my hands, unto the salv souls.

And it came to pass that the hearts of the so and also those which were with them, took cour unto the Lamanites, to declare unto them the wo

And it came to pass when they had arriven of the land of the Lamanites, that they separate and departed one from another, trusting in the L should meet again at the close of their harvest: posed that great was the work which they had u And assuredly it was great, for they had underta the word of God to a wild, and a hardened, an people; a people which delighted in the murde phites, and robbing, and plundering them; and were set upon riches, or upon gold, and silver, stones; yet they sought to obtain these things and plundering, that they might not labor for th own hands: thus they were a very indolent peo whom did worship idols, and the curse of God them because of the traditions of their fathers;

Images Courtesy Institute for Religious Research

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

APOLOGETICS
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NEW CHILDREN'S RHYMING BOOK RELEASED

How many times have you purchased Bible storybooks or tapes that claim to be “biblical,” only to be disappointed because they did not live up to their claim? (You’ve seen those pictures of Noah’s ark with multiple doors). In reality, probably most religious children’s books on the market are fraught with unscriptural aspects that require the conscientious parent to screen, edit, or correct before passing them along to their children. If you can relate to what I am saying, then you will be pleased with our series on central Bible characters.

The latest entry in this exceptional series is titled *A Man Who Loved Money*. Using a masterful blend of rhyming verse expressed on a child’s level, Kyle Butt has captured the meaning and importance of the account of the rich young ruler as recorded in Matthew 19, Mark 10, and Luke 18. Targeted at children from two to five years old,

this volume conveys the conversation between Jesus and the rich man in a penetrating way that will embed the story in a child’s mind. The book is filled with colorful, eye-catching illustrations by Jeremy Pate that are sure to hold a child’s attention.

The previous two entries in this series are equally excellent. *The Patient Man from Uz* portrays the entire book of Job accurately, genuinely capturing the central theme of the book, while conveying the message of Job on a child’s level. *A Son Who Ran Away* presents the parable of the prodigal son in a fascinating, easy-to-read manner. Through this memorable story, Christ brought to light the ravages of sin, the value of true repentance, the love of the heavenly Father, and the need to possess a compassionate attitude toward those who need God.

A Son Who Ran Away and *A Patient Man From Uz* are available only in hardback. *A Man Who Loved Money* is available only in soft cover. These volumes are a must for parents and grandparents who desire to introduce their children and grandchildren to important Bible characters whom God chose to preserve on the pages of Holy Writ for all time. And, like all of A.P.’s materials, you cannot beat the price. Add them to your child’s library today!

Dave Miller



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for More Details